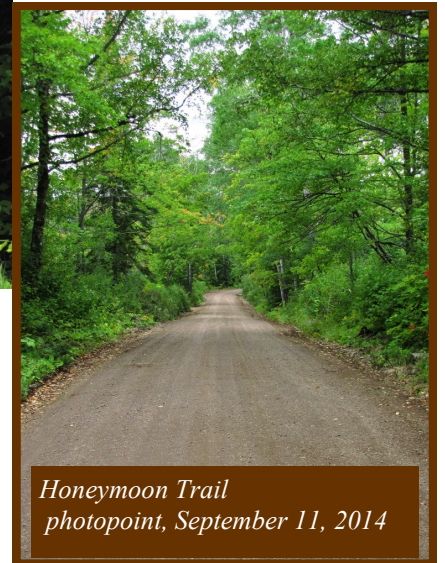


Fall Color Report

Superior National Forest
September 12, 2014



*Honeymoon Trail
photopoint, September 11, 2014*



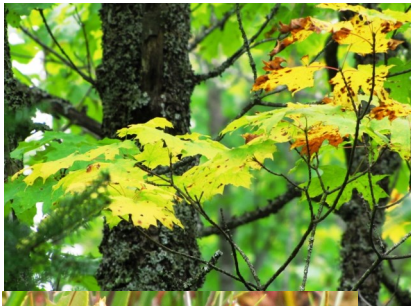
Kestrel

I have seen flocks streaming south in the fall so large that they were flowing over from horizon to horizon in an almost continuous stream all day long, at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour, like a mighty river in the sky, widening, contracting, descending like falls and cataracts, and rising suddenly here and there in huge ragged masses like high-plashing spray.

John Muir, regarding passenger pigeons



Fall is a season for anniversaries. On September 1, 1914, the last drop in the mighty river of passenger pigeons described by John Muir passed away, and autumn in North America would never again be the same. We may revel in the leaves as they change, but imagine what it would have been like with thousands upon thousands of migrating birds coursing through the landscape. We've kept the trees and the forest, but it is like the set of a play with all the supporting actors, but missing a lead role. While our Superior National Forest lacks the large stands of oak where these birds thrived, we are still in their historic range, and they would have been part of our autumn colors.



Humans were responsible for the passing of the passenger pigeon, but fifty years ago on September 3, 1964, we were also responsible for passing the Wilderness Act. Where fifty years early, we'd caused the end of a species, the Wilderness Act set aside land to be forever wild, and provided homes for endangered species. Our Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness helped provide refuge for wolves, eagles, and other animals that found their existence threatened, and helped these animals recover from the edge to sustainable populations.



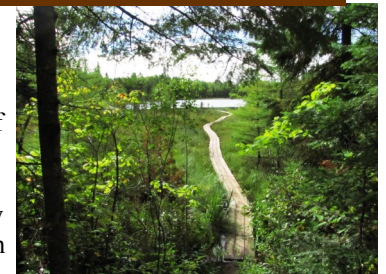
Pitcher plant

The BWCAW was the site of another event with a September anniversary. On September 12, 2011, the Pagami Creek Fire roared over 16 miles in one day, on its way to burning approximately 90,000 acres. Today, the forest is regenerating, as it always has in this fire dependent ecosystem. Jack pine in the area are up to knee high in some places, and aspen are as tall as a person. The cycle continues, even as it did when passenger pigeons haunted the forest, just as fall is part of the cycle of seasons.

What other anniversaries are there for you in the fall? Memories of autumn fishing trips, the first apples from the tree in your yard, or the last

time you jumped in a leaf pile? Fall is a season for anniversaries.

If you go to make your memories this week, about 5 to 10 percent of the leaves have color. Many of the birches and aspen are showing yellow, or at least yellow green – but the overall impression is still of a green forest. But keep your eyes open, right around that corner might be that one red maple tree.



*Pagami Fire area,
3 years post fire*



*Pagami Fire area,
3 years post fire*